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# PERSONALITY TRAITS AND CLOTHING PREFERENCES*

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**Summary**. In the modern world, the styles, colors, and patterns people wear are often intended to reflect who they are – showcasing their character and ambitions (Mair, 2018). Observing and analyzing clothing can thus provide valuable insights into the meaning behind what people wear. This knowledge can be useful not only from a scientific standpoint but also in business or everyday life. The conducted study aimed to determine the correlation between clothing preferences in terms of colors and patterns and personality traits within the Big Five Model. The study was carried out online using a custom-designed questionnaire to measure clothing preferences, and the IPIP-BFN-20 test (M. Brent Donnellan, Frederick L. Oswald, M. Brendan Baird, E. Richard Lucas, 2016) in the Polish adaptation by E. Topolewska, E. Skimina, W. Strus, J. Cieciuch, and T. Rowiński (2014). A total of 425 participants took part (226 women, 197 men) aged 14 to 76 years ($M$ = 30.9, $SD$ = 10.12). The study revealed weak and very weak, though significant, correlations. Individuals with high levels of stability preferred green and yellow clothing with plain or geometric patterns and avoided floral or black patterns; agreeable individuals preferred floral, black, red, dark blue, and especially white clothes; extroverted individuals favored red and white; conscientious individuals preferred black. Those highly extroverted and with high intellect were most willing to express themselves through clothing, while highly stable individuals had no such need.

**Key words**: psychology of fashion, psychology of color, personality, Big Five

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## Theoretical Introduction

Research has shown that personality traits from the Big Five model significantly influence various aspects of life, such as career success, interpersonal relationships, and mental and physical health (Ozer and Benet-Martinez, 2006). The Big Five Model, also known as the Five-Factor Model of Personality, is one of the most recognized and widely studied theories of personality in psychology. This model identifies five major factors that make up a person's personality:

1. **Neuroticism** – the tendency to experience negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, depression, and impulsiveness (Costa and McCrae, 1992).
2. **Extraversion** – the tendency to be sociable, assertive, energetic, and to seek stimulation (John and Srivastava, 1999).
3. **Openness to Experience** – intellectual curiosity, creativity, independent thinking, and a willingness to consider new ideas (McCrae and Costa, 1997).
4. **Agreeableness** – the tendency to be compassionate, trusting, helpful, and cooperative (Graziano and Eisenberg, 1997).
5. **Conscientiousness** – the degree of organization, perseverance, self-discipline, and motivation to achieve (Barrick and Mount, 1991).

Clothing preferences are closely tied to individual personality traits, lifestyle, and socio-cultural factors. Research shows that the choice of clothing is influenced by factors such as personality traits from the Big Five model, particularly extraversion and openness to experience (Gohary and Heidarzadeh Hanzaee, 2014); self-image and the need for self-presentation (Kang et al., 2011); membership in social groups and subcultures (Xu et al., 2012); fashion trends and media influence (Khare and Rakesh, 2010).

Extroverted and open individuals are more likely to choose fashionable, original, and eye-catching clothing (Gohary and Heidarzadeh Hanzaee, 2014), whereas introverted and closed individuals tend to prefer more subdued and classic styles (Kang et al., 2011).

The need to express oneself through clothing, as well as belonging to specific social groups or subcultures, also plays a significant role (Xu et al., 2012). Young people often choose a clothing style that is characteristic of their peer environment.

In summary, clothing preferences result from the interaction between personality traits, individual needs, and socio-cultural influences (Khare and Rakesh, 2010). The author became interested in the relationship between clothing preferences and personality traits within a Polish group.

## Aim of Research

The aim of the study was to determine the relationship between personality traits according to the Big Five model and clothing preferences in terms of color and pattern[2].

The following five hypotheses were formulated:

H1. There are differences in clothing preferences (patterns and colors) among individuals with varying levels of extraversion.
H2. There are differences in clothing preferences (patterns and colors) among individuals with varying levels of agreeableness.
H3. There are differences in clothing preferences (patterns and colors) among individuals with varying levels of conscientiousness.
H4. There are differences in clothing preferences (patterns and colors) among individuals with varying levels of stability.
H5. There are differences in clothing preferences (patterns and colors) among individuals with varying levels of intellect.

## The Method

The study was conducted in the form of a survey. The online questionnaire was divided into three main sections: sociodemographic questions, clothing preference questions, and personality traits. First, sociodemographic data were collected, where participants were asked about their age and gender. The next set of questions focused on clothing preferences, which were examined in two aspects: color and pattern. The third part of the questionnaire included items aimed at identifying personality traits.

## Research Procedure

The sample selection was carried out using "snowball" and "door-to-door" methods. Participants included freelancers, as well as students from Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz. The study involved a group of residents from Bydgoszcz, including both adults and adolescents. The research was conducted using an online questionnaire, which was distributed to individuals interested in participating in the study. All participants consented to take part in the research and were informed about its purpose, their right to withdraw from participation, and that their responses would be anonymized. Minors were informed that they could participate in the study only after obtaining consent from their legal guardians. Data were collected from April 7, 2021, to September 23, 2021. A total of 423 participants took part in the study (226 women, 197 men), aged between 14 and 76 years ($M = 30.92$; $SD = 10.12$)].

[2] Due to the fact that the study does not pose a threat to the respondents, the consent of the research ethics committee of the Faculty of Public Health UKW was not sought.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Personality Traits and Clothing Preferences ($N$ = 423)

| | *M* | *SD* | Min | $Q_1$ | *Me* | $Q_3$ | Max | W Shapiro-Wilk | *SKE* | *K* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Personality Traits* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Extraversion | 3.04 | .92 | 1 | 2.50 | 3.00 | 3.75 | 5 | .98*** | .04 | –.41 |
| Agreeableness | 3.68 | .73 | 1 | 3.25 | 3.75 | 4.25 | 5 | .98*** | –.25 | .02 |
| Stability | 2.69 | .85 | 1 | 2.00 | 2.75 | 3.25 | 5 | .98*** | .23 | –.42 |
| Conscientiousness | 3.26 | .90 | 1 | 2.63 | 3.25 | 4.00 | 5 | .98*** | –.13 | –.53 |
| Intellect | 3.80 | .70 | 1 | 3.25 | 3.75 | 4.25 | 5 | .97*** | –.45 | .15 |
| *Preferences of Clothing Color* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Black Color | 2.86 | .83 | 0 | 2.33 | 3.00 | 3.67 | 4 | .95*** | –.46 | –.43 |
| Green Color | 1.53 | 1.15 | 0 | .67 | 1.33 | 2.33 | 4 | .94*** | .38 | –.91 |
| White Color | 2.37 | .94 | 0 | 1.67 | 2.33 | 3.00 | 4 | .97*** | –.18 | –.56 |
| Dark Blue Color | 2.49 | 1.01 | 0 | 1.67 | 2.67 | 3.33 | 4 | .96*** | –.41 | –.46 |
| Red Color | 1.84 | 1.10 | 0 | 1.00 | 1.67 | 2.67 | 4 | .97*** | .11 | –.82 |
| Yellow Color | 1.56 | 1.16 | 0 | .67 | 1.33 | 2.67 | 4 | .94*** | .36 | –.88 |
| *Preferences of Clothing Pattern* | | | | | | | | | | |
| No Pattern – Plain | 2.80 | .80 | 1 | 2.17 | 2.83 | 3.50 | 4 | .97*** | –.29 | –.59 |
| Geometric Pattern | 2.02 | 1.17 | 0 | 1.17 | 2.00 | 2.83 | 4 | .96*** | –.09 | –.99 |
| Floral Pattern | 1.50 | 1.21 | 0 | .33 | 1.33 | 2.50 | 4 | .93*** | .37 | –.95 |
| *Other variables included* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Age | 30.92 | 10.12 | 14 | 22 | 29 | 39 | 76 | .93*** | .72 | .15 |
| Clothing as an Expression of Personality | 1.58 | .90 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | .88*** | –.05 | –.76 |

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

## Tools Used

The study utilized two tools. The personality assessment was conducted using the IPIP-BFN-20 test developed by M. Brent Donnellan, Frederick L. Oswald, M. Brendan Baird, and E. Richard Lucas (2006), in its Polish adaptation by Ewa Topolewska, Ewa Skimina, Włodzimierz Strus, Jan Cieciuch, and Tomasz Rowiński (2014). The questionnaire consists of 20 questions measuring five (5) personality traits, aligned with the Big Five model. It allows for the assessment of traits such as: extraversion, stability (the opposite of the original neuroticism), conscientiousness, agreeableness, and intellect (the equivalent of the original openness to experience). The test does not have established norms for the Polish sample. For the purposes of this study, a custom categorization of results was adopted.

To measure clothing preferences, a questionnaire was developed specifically for this study. Participants were presented with images of T-shirts in six colors (white, black, dark blue, green, red, yellow) and three pattern variations (geometric, floral, and plain). They were then asked to indicate their willingness to wear T-shirts of different colors and patterns. Participants recorded their responses on a Likert scale, ranging from 0 to 4, where 0 indicated "no", 1 represented "rather no", 2 was "hard to say", 3 signified "rather yes", and 4 meant "yes".

## Results

To verify the hypotheses, statistical analysis was conducted using JASP and MS Excel software. The applied statistical tests allowed for the verification of the hypotheses. The presented article also includes the results of statistical analyses of relationships that were not initially hypothesized.

The table below presents the main descriptive statistics of the distributions for each of the analyzed variables.

None of the variables exhibited a distribution resembling a normal distribution. However, since the sample size was large ($N > 100$), and the skewness and kurtosis coefficients fell within the range *of* <-1+1>, we invoked the Central Limit Theorem (Atukorala et al., 2015; Hilhorst, 2009). Therefore, parametric Pearson correlation coefficients were utilized for the calculations.

## Hypothesis Testing

To verify the hypotheses, a correlation matrix was created. This matrix encompasses a cross-section of clothing preferences regarding various patterns and colors (dependent variables) alongside all personality traits (independent variables). The hypotheses H1–H5 pertain to the relationships between each personality trait and each clothing variant individually, allowing for partial confirmation of the hypotheses for only some of the color/pattern variants.

In addition to the main variables included in the study, the analysis included age as an explanatory variable. This allowed us to explore the relationship between age and preferences for expressing personality through clothing. This comprehensive approach aimed to investigate how these factors interact with the established relationships between personality traits and clothing preferences.

Table 2. Correlation Matrix Between Clothing Preferences, Personality Traits and Age Using *r*-Persona ($N$ = 423)

| | Stability | Agree-ableness | Extra-version | Conscienti-ousness | Intellect | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Preferences of clothing color* | | | | | | |
| Black | –.103* | .151** | .045 | –.116* | .011 | –.227*** |
| Green | .129** | .022 | .03 | –.037 | .069 | .156** |
| White | –.076 | .224*** | .124* | –.062 | .035 | –.183*** |
| Dark Blue | –.02 | .114* | .022 | –.068 | .022 | –.094 |
| Red | .077 | .122* | .098* | .024 | .031 | .031 |
| Yellow | .102* | .026 | –.005 | –.005 | .078 | .047 |
| *Preferences of clothing pattern* | | | | | | |
| Plain | .159** | .041 | .053 | .038 | .032 | .142** |
| Geometric | .117* | .055 | .014 | –.066 | .031 | .026 |
| Floral | –.145** | .184*** | .08 | –.063 | .059 | –.195*** |
| *Other variables included* | | | | | | |
| Clothing as an Expression of Personality | –.078 | .172*** | .114* | .024 | .196*** | –.087 |

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

In the conducted study, a total of 60 analyses were performed to examine the correlations between clothing preferences and personality traits, as well as age. Out of these analyses, 22 statistically significant correlations were identified, characterized by low correlation coefficients.

The most correlations were recorded between the variables "Stability" and "clothing preferences expressed in the colors and patterns of clothing". It turned out that more stable individuals preferred green or yellow clothing with smooth or geometric patterns somewhat more than neurotic individuals, and less often chose black

clothing and floral patterns. No significant correlation was observed between the trait of stability and considering clothing as an expression of personality. Hypothesis H4 was confirmed for six (6) out of nine (9) clothing characteristics.

Several low correlations were also noted between the variable of Agreeableness and clothing color and pattern preferences. Individuals with a higher level of agreeableness preferred floral, black, red, and dark blue clothing, and above all, white. Notably, more agreeable individuals were more likely to state that clothing should express their personality. Hypothesis H2 was confirmed for five out of nine clothing characteristics.

In the remaining cases, correlations were sporadic. More extroverted individuals slightly preferred the colors red and white and were more likely to declare that they express themselves through their clothing than less extroverted individuals. In the case of individuals with high scores on the dimension of Conscientiousness, only one preference was noted, which pertained to black clothing. Hypothesis H1 was confirmed in the case of 2 out of 9 clothing characteristics, while H3 was confirmed in the case of 1 out of 9 characteristics.

No statistically significant preferences were recorded for the trait of Intellect – thus, hypothesis H5 was not confirmed.

A significant correlation was noted between Intellect and the declared expression of personality through clothing ($r = .196$; $p < .001$).

The results of the correlation analysis between age and preferred colors and patterns indicated that the older a person is, the more they prefer green and plain clothing, and the less they prefer black, white, and floral patterns.

## Expanded data analysis

In the further part of the analysis, the preferences for individual patterns and colors were compared. This is an additional analysis that does not stem from the proposed hypotheses and is exploratory in nature. The results are presented in Table 3.

All correlations were statistically significant, mostly at a moderate level.

It is worth noting the lowest and highest correlations. High-border correlations ($r = .7$) were observed for the preferences of black and dark blue ($r = .690$; $p < .001$) and for black and floral patterns ($r = .692$; $p < .001$). Correlations exceeding $r = .6$ were recorded for the preference of geometric patterns and all colors except for white.

Weak correlations were noted for the preferences of black and plain patterns ($r = .264$; $p < .001$) as well as for floral and plain patterns ($r = .188$; $p < .001$).

The final analysis concerned the significance of gender for clothing preferences. Before conducting the analysis using the chi-square test, the equality of the compared groups was checked. The result was statistically significant $-\chi^2(1) = 3.976$; $p = .046$. However, this value is close to the significance threshold ($p = .05$), and the difference is statistically small ($\phi^2 = .07$), so a standard analysis was performed using the Student's t-test for independent data. The results of the difference test are presented in Table 4.

Table 3. Intercorrelation matrix between clothing preferences using Pearson's *r* (*N* = 423)

| | Black | Green | White | Dark Blue | Red | Yellow | Plain | Geometrical |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Green | .337*** | | | | | | | |
| White | .61*** | .35*** | | | | | | |
| Dark Blue | .69*** | .518*** | .591*** | | | | | |
| Red | .526*** | .576*** | .436*** | .545*** | | | | |
| Yellow | .438*** | .608*** | .475*** | .488*** | .645*** | | | |
| Plain | .264*** | .629*** | .375*** | .452*** | .641*** | .599*** | | |
| Geometric | .63*** | .647*** | .548*** | .665*** | .68*** | .683*** | .469*** | |
| Floral | .692*** | .455*** | .656*** | .669*** | .532*** | .543*** | .188*** | .375*** |

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Five differences were observed in clothing preferences between women and men. Men preferred the colors green and yellow, while women preferred white. There were no differences regarding the colors black, dark blue, and red. In terms of patterns, men preferred geometric patterns and solid clothing, while women favored floral designs.

In terms of expressing personality through clothing, women were significantly more likely than men to admit to this tendency.

## Discussion

Previous studies suggest that clothing preferences are multidimensional and related to various factors, such as individual personality traits, self-perception, culture, and social context. For example, the theory of self-presentation suggests that people dress in a way that allows them to express their identity, social image, or belonging to a specific social group (Goffman, 1959). The theory of social signaling, on the other hand, suggests that clothing can serve as a means of communicating one's social status, both within and outside a group (Jones, 1996).

The results of the data analysis in this study are consistent with some previous research that have shown relationships between personality traits and clothing preferences. For example, the findings of presented study align with earlier studies suggesting that individuals with higher levels of neuroticism may prefer more traditional, conventional styles of dress (Hudson and Huang, 2015). Additionally, the results confirm the relationships between age and clothing preferences observed in other studies, such as the preference for more classic styles by older individuals (Lennon and Rudd, 2016).

Table 4. Results of *t*-Student Test for Clothing Preferences Between Men and Women

| Test | Descriptive statistics | | | | t-test for independent samples | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Women ($n$ = 226) | | Men ($n$ = 197) | | Comparison between groups $df$ = 421 | |
| | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *t* | *p* |
| *Preferences of Clothing Color* | | | | | | |
| Black Color | 2.91 | .88 | 2.79 | .77 | 1.583 | .114[a] |
| Green Color | 1.28 | 1.15 | 1.81 | 1.10 | –4.767 | <.001 |
| White Color | 2.47 | .95 | 2.25 | .92 | 2.383 | ,018 |
| Dark Blue Color | 2.48 | 1.07 | 2.49 | .94 | –.070 | .944[a] |
| Red Color | 1.81 | 1.13 | 1.88 | 1.06 | –.743 | .458 |
| Yellow Color | 1.47 | 1.21 | 1.66 | 1.09 | –1.748 | .081[a] |
| *Preferences of Clothing Pattern* | | | | | | |
| No Pattern – Plain | 2.69 | .75 | 2.93 | .84 | –3.084 | .002[a] |
| Geometric Patterns | 1.78 | 1.12 | 2.29 | 1.16 | –4.649 | <.001 |
| Floral Patterns | 1.75 | 1.21 | 1.22 | 1.16 | 4.522 | <.001 |
| *Other variables included* | | | | | | |
| Clothing as an Expression of Personality | 1.74 | .87 | 1.38 | .90 | 4.199 | <.001 |

[a] – test with a correction due to the violation of the homogeneity of variances assumption

However, the results are not consistent with all previous research. For example, the relationship between gender and clothing preferences, which has been observed in some earlier studies (Johnson, Lennon and Rudd, 2017), was not confirmed. This may suggest that clothing preferences are a complex phenomenon that can be moderated by various factors, such as culture, individual experiences, or social context.

The results of the study can be explained by the theory of self-presentation, suggesting that clothing preferences are related to expressing identity and social image. Individuals with different personality traits, ages, or genders may choose various clothing styles to express their individuality, belonging to a specific social group, or communicate their social statuses. A higher level of neuroticism may be associated with a preference for more traditional clothing styles that can provide a sense of safety and emotional stability. Furthermore, the preference for a more classic style of

clothing among older individuals may be linked to cultural norms and expectations regarding attire in older age.

However, the lack of a relationship between gender and clothing preferences in my study may indicate changing social norms related to clothing, which could influence gender differences in clothing preferences. Additionally, the cultural context, individual experiences, and personal preferences may play a more significant role in shaping clothing preferences than gender.

It is worth noting that the presented study has some limitations. First of all, it was conducted on a relatively small sample compared to the Polish population, which may limit the overall representativeness of the results. Additionally, it relies on self-reports from participants, which can be prone to subjective errors and biases. It is also important to consider that clothing preferences may change depending on the situation or circumstances, making it valuable to conduct a test-retest to determine the consistency of results over time.

Only one research method (a survey) was used to collect data, which may have affected the overall representativeness and reliability of the results. Furthermore, only basic colors were examined without considering their shades (yellow instead of honey, mustard, sunny, etc.). Finally, the study relied on respondents' self-reported clothing preferences, which may not always reflect actual behaviors in reality.

Despite these limitations, the conclusions from the analysis suggest a relationship between personality traits, age, gender, and clothing preferences. These results may be useful in the context of marketing and fashion design, where understanding consumer preferences can be significant in creating attractive market offerings.

Clothing preferences are a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors, such as personality traits, age, culture, and social context. The results of presented study align with some previous research but do not confirm all existing findings. Further studies in this area are needed to better understand the relationships between clothing preferences and various psychological and contextual factors.

## Conclusions

The statistical analysis conducted on the collected data revealed differences in clothing preferences depending on the personality traits, age, and gender of the respondents. It was confirmed that there is a relationship between personality traits and clothing preferences, although this relationship is not unequivocal in all cases.

More stable individuals tended to prefer green or yellow clothing with solid or geometric patterns and less frequently chose floral or black clothing. In contrast, the trait of Agreeableness was associated with preferences for floral, black, red, dark blue, and especially white clothing. For the traits of Extraversion and Conscientiousness, only minor differences in clothing preferences were noted. More extraverted individuals preferred red and white colors more often and reported expressing themselves through their clothing. On the other hand, highly conscientious individuals

preferred black clothing. No statistically significant preferences were found related to the trait of Intellect. However, a significant correlation was observed between the trait of Intellect and the declared expression of personality through clothing, which may indicate a subtler relationship between these variables.

An additional analysis of age showed that older individuals preferred green and solid clothing while less frequently choosing black, white, and floral options. This suggests that clothing preferences may be linked to life experience and can change with age.

The analysis of the respondents' gender revealed differences in clothing preferences between women and men. Men preferred green and yellow, while women preferred white. No differences were found regarding black, dark blue, and red colors. Additionally, men favored geometric patterns, while women preferred floral patterns. This suggests that gender may influence clothing preferences.

The problem of the psychosocial conditions of clothing preferences and the significance of color and pattern preferences for individual functioning requires further exploration.

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CECHY OSOBOWOŚCI
I PREFERENCJE ODZIEŻOWE

**Abstrakt**. We współczesnym świecie style, kolory i wzory, które noszą ludzie, często mają odzwierciedlać to, kim są – eksponując ich charakter i ambicje (Mair, 2018). Obserwacja i analiza ubrań może zatem dostarczyć cennych spostrzeżeń na temat znaczenia tego, co ludzie noszą. Ta wiedza może być przydatna nie tylko z naukowego punktu widzenia, ale także w biznesie lub życiu codziennym. Przeprowadzone badanie miało na celu określenie korelacji między preferencjami odzieżowymi pod względem kolorów i wzorów a cechami osobowości w ramach Modelu Wielkiej Piątki. Badanie przeprowadzono online przy użyciu specjalnie zaprojektowanego kwestionariusza do pomiaru preferencji odzieżowych oraz testu IPIP-BFN-20 (M. Brent Donnellan, Frederick L. Oswald, M. Brendan Baird, E. Richard Lucas, 2016) w polskiej adaptacji E. Topolewskiej, E. Skiminy, W. Strusa, J. Cieciucha i T. Rowińskiego (2014). W badaniu wzięło udział łącznie 425 uczestników (226 kobiet, 197 mężczyzn) w wieku od 14 do 76 lat ($M$ = 30,9, $SD$ = 10,12). Badanie wykazało słabe i bardzo słabe, choć istotne, korelacje. Osoby o wysokim poziomie stabilności preferowały zielono-żółte ubrania z prostymi lub geometrycznymi wzorami i unikały wzorów kwiatowych lub czarnych; osoby zgodne preferowały ubrania kwiatowe, czarne, czerwone, ciemnoniebieskie, a zwłaszcza białe; osoby ekstrawertyczne preferowały czerwone i białe; osoby sumienne preferowały czerń. Osoby wysoce ekstrawertyczne i o wysokim intelekcie były najbardziej chętne do wyrażania siebie poprzez ubrania, podczas gdy osoby wysoce stabilne nie miały takiej potrzeby.
**Słowa kluczowe**: psychologia mody, psychologia koloru, osobowość, Wielka Piątka

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